Capt. Elisha Yale (1742–1825)

Origin and Family

Born Aug 29, 1742. Died April 1, 1825, age 82.

Father: Elihu Yale (1703–1745)
Mother: Judith Howe (1709–)
Spouse: Rebecca North (1743–1825)

Children:[1]

1. Elisha Yale (1763–1840)
2. Elihu Yale (1767–)
3. Aurelia Yale (1773–)
4. Eber Yale (1776–)
5. Rebecca Yale (1780–)
6. Wealthy Ann Yale (1784–)

From Rodney Horace Yale[1]: “Capt. Elisha Yale of Wallingford, Conn., afterward of Canaan, in the same state, was married to Rebecca North, of Farmington, 1762. He was a farmer.”

In the nearby town of Goshen, Rev. A.G. Hibbard gathered an early list of marriages which included this entry: “Elisha Yale & Rebecca North, 08 Sept 1762.”[2] Rebecca North was the daughter of Joseph North and Martha Denny.[3]

Occupation and Property

Farms in colonial Connecticut were commonly 60 to 100 acres, which were “huge by European standards.”[5] Only one-third of the property was planted with crops, with the remaining land being pastures and forests. The main crops were maize, wheat, rye, and rice.

“The typical farmer in Connecticut in the mid-eighteenth century owned 10 cattle, 16 sheep, six pigs, two horses, and a team of oxen. Cows produced milk, cheese, and butter; chickens laid eggs, while sheep provided wool for warm clothing. Virtually every farm household was self-sufficient in terms of food production.”[5] Up to 40% of a farmer's production was sold in public markets, providing income for supplies and expansion.

“The high incomes of farmers by contemporary world standards is revealed most clearly in their heavy consumption of meat and dairy products. Total meat consumption was around 200 pounds annually for adult males. This diet led to Americans being an average of two inches taller than their English counterparts.”[5]

Canaan is about 70 miles from Wallingford – perhaps 90 minutes away today but in 1760 it could have been a two to four day trek. Early roads were no more than trails, and travelers would mark the paths by blazing sections of tree bark at eye level along the trail – hence the term “trail blazing”.[6] However, during Elisha’s lifetime, Connecticut led the colonies in the rise of turnpikes and toll roads, with over 133 turnpike corporations by 1808. This passage in the Connecticut State Assembly minutes in 1799 reveals that Elisha lived near a toll road:

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"…the said company shall and may erect two turnpike gates agreeable to the accepted report of the committee aforesaid, within a half mile of the dwelling house of Elisha Yale of Canaan."[7] Tolls ranged from 25 cents for four-wheel carriages to 4 cents for a person or horse. Sheep and Hogs were ½ cent each.
The Elisha Yale household is listed in the Federal census of 1790 as follows:[9]

- Free white males 16 years and upward, including head of families - One
- Free white males under 16 years of age – One
- Free white females – Four
- Slaves – None

Military Service

Elisha was just three years old and the youngest of six children when his father Elihu died. He lived through turbulent times, including the French-Indian Wars, The Revolutionary War, and the War of 1812. "Captain Elisha Yale was a lieutenant, and then a captain, in the Revolutionary War of 1776-1783."[8] This is supported by an entry in Record of Service of Connecticut Men in the Revolutionary War as Captain ___ Yale.[11]

Connecticut farms were considered a particularly important source of provisions for the army. This is reinforced by an article found in the Connecticut Courant in July 12, 1774:

"We hear from Canaan, that on the 21st of June last, a large number of the most respectable Inhabitants of that and neighboring Towns, assembled together, at the Sign of the Brazen Ball and raised a Standard for Liberty, 78 Feet high, and fixed a Scarlet Flag on the Top, 15 Feet in Length, with the Words LIBERTY and PROPERTY inscribed on it in large Capitals. After which they retired to Capt. Lawrence's Tavern, where a Number of loyal and constitutional toasts were drank[sic]."[9]

"LIBERTY AND PROPERTY were understood to be fundamental rights, and the patriots of Canaan intended to guard fiercely these two pillars of English law. "LIBERTY AND PROPERTY" would become a popular, bonding cry shared by New England patriots. Canaan men, as well as men from sister towns, enlisted of their own free will and served with bravery and distinction as volunteers in Continental Line regiments or in their local militia."[9]

"All through the Revolution, Canaan provided many necessities such as made-for-war iron goods, guns and their accouterments, blankets, clothing, shoes, meat, flour and hundreds of bushels of grains and charcoal. Heavy taxation provided money for the cause."[9]

End of Life

Canaan Cemetery records in Litchfield County, CT., has these two entries for the "Under Mountain Cemetery":[4]

- Elisha Yale, died April 6, 1825, age 82
- Rebecca Yale, wife of Elisha, died Sept 8, 1825, age 83.

Below is a copy of the Last Will and Testament of Elisha Yale. He estimated his Real Estate at $4,000 which made him wealthy in that time (the average 60 acre farm in 30 years later in Connecticut was worth $1200).[12] A copy of the original handwritten will is in the files of the author.

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Notice that the signature is a simple “X”. Given his military rank and status, the 'X' likely indicates physical frailty or disability in his final years rather than illiteracy.

Last Will and Testament of Elisha Yale, dated April 14, 1820

In the name of God Amen. I, Elisha Yale of Canaan in the State of Connecticut, being of sound mind and memory, do make and ordain this my last will and testament in the manner following. In the first place, I give my Soul to God who gave it, hoping in a blessed immortality through the merits of Jesus Christ my Savior and Redeemer. In the next place I order and decree that my funeral charges and lawful debts be paid out of the avails of my estate.

And whereas I have estimated my Real Estate to be worth the sum of Four Thousand Dollars, I give and bequeath property and Real Estate in the manner following. And whereas my said heir shall [be valued at] Four Thousand Dollars. In the next place I give my wife Rebecca out of my real estate during her natural life one thousand three hundred thirty three dollars and thirty three cents, and the north half of my dwelling house is to be included in this gift and estimation, and in the next place I give to my daughter Wealthy the use of one half of my dwelling house, namely the North half of the Cellars(?) , the North [Rooms] and the North Chambers and a suitable privilege on the [attic] for one person. The said Wealthy is to come into [possession] of the half of the said house after the death of myself and the death of my wife Rebecca and the said Wealthy is allowed(?) the use and occupancy of this half of said house only while she the said Wealthy is a single woman and bears the name of Yale, but if the said Wealthy should marry the said Wealthy is only to have her equal share in said half of said house with the rest of my children.

And I give to my daughter Wealthy all the furniture which may belong to me at my demise, with the reserve only that my wife Rebecca is to have the use of said furniture during her natural life.

I also give to my daughter Wealthy the sum of eight hundred dollars. I also give to my son Elisha the sum of four hundred thirty three dollars and thirty three cents.

I also give to my grandchildren Stephen Yale, Laura Yale, Polly Yale, Charry Yale and Truman Yale the sum of four hundred thirty three dollars and thirty three cents. In the gift to my son Elisha Yale, and to my grandchildren Stephen Yale, Laura Yale, Polly Yale, Charry Yale and Truman Yale one [piece of land] is to be included lying Southeasterly of my dwelling house and on the side of the mountains containing about twenty acres has been used and occupied by my son Elisha and Elihu Yale for some years and the said land is to be set one half to my son Elisha and my grandchildren Stephen, Laura, Polly, and Charry and Truman Yale, and the gift to my grandchildren above mentioned is to be equally divided among them.

I give to the heir of my son Eber Yale deceased the sum of three hundred thirty three dollars and thirty three cents.

I also give to my daughter Aurelia Handy the sum of three hundred thirty three dollars and thirty three cents.

And I do constitute and appoint Ebenezer Bebee, Executor of my last will and testament made at Canaan this 14th of April 1820.

Elisha Yale (his mark – X)

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Research Notes

Online Genealogy References:
WikiTree ID: Yale-9
FamilySearch ID: KNBM-6X1
Find a Grave Memorial: 34590731

Further Reading:

- Yale, Max Brian. *Guide to the Max Brian Yale Genealogical Collection*. *Max Brian Yale Genealogical Collection.* 2025

- Yale, Max Brian. *Yale Family Coat of Arms* - Origin and History. *Max Brian Yale Genealogical Collection*, 2025

References

1. Yale, Rodney Horace. *Yale Genealogy and History of Wales*. Beatrice, NE: Milburn & Scott, 1908. Ref no. 106 p. 139

2. Hibbard, A.G. History of the Town of Goshen, Connecticut. - Marriages in Goshen, (FamilySearch Online)

3. Town of Canaan. "Town History." Canaan / Falls Village, Connecticut.

4. Find a Grave Memorial 34590731

5. Greene, Jack P and Pole, J.R. A Companion to the American Revolution, 2000

6. Burns, William. Science and Technology in Colonial America, 2005

7. The Public Records of the State of Connecticut, (Special Acts & Resolutions) Vol. 2, 1837

8. Rodney Horace Yale. *Autobiographical Notes (Manuscript)*, Private Collection, 1934.

9. 1790 United States Census,Canaan, Connecticut. Entry for Elisha Yale,

10. Connecticut Adjutant-General's Office: Record of service of Connecticut men in the I. War of the Revolution, II. War of 1812, III. Mexican War

11. Census of Farm Real Estate Values in New England States 1850 to 1930

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